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REPORT
OF THE ECA/KAF JOINT WORKSHOP ON THE PROBLEMS
OF THE EFFECTIVE USE OF RADIO FORUMS/CLUBS IN RURAL AFRICA
(Addis Ababa, 1 - 9 December 1977)

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PART ONE : ORGANIZATION OF THE WORKSHOP

Opening of the Workshop

1. The Workshop on the Problems of the Effective Use of Radio Forums and Clubs in Rural Africa was held from 1 to 9 December 1977 in Africa Hall, headquarters of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It was organized under the joint sponsorship of ECA and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAF) of the Federal Republic of Germany, with the co-operation of the Union of National Radio Broadcasting and Television Organizations of Africa (URTNA).

2. The purpose of the Workshop was to enable the participants to have as broad a discussion as possible on the problems encountered and the solutions to them and to work out practical guidelines to be used in countries which already had radio forums and clubs and in those where such schemes were envisaged for the future.

3. The Conference was attended by 39 delegates representing the following 23 countries: Benin, Botswana, Burundi, Cape Verde, Chad, the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, the Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, the Sudan, Swaziland, the Upper Volta and Zambia. Observers from eight international intergovernmental organizations, namely, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Health Organization (WHO), the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Union of National Radio Broadcasting and Television Organizations of Africa (URTNA), and from four international voluntary agencies, namely, the Africa Co-operative Savings and Credit Association (ACOSCA), Agri-Service (Ethiopia), the Association for Social Work Education in Africa (ASWEA) and the International Institute of Communications (IIC), participated in the Workshop.

4. The Workshop was opened on 1 December 1977 by the Deputy Executive Secretary of ECA, who said he was sure the participants would work together in an attempt to find realistic solutions to the many problems related to the effective use of radio forums and clubs in the countries represented. Those problems included (1) the fact that the programmes of radio forums and clubs were training-oriented and should therefore be drawn up according to pedagogical principles, (2) the lack of personal relations between the producer of a programme and the rural listeners and (3) the problem of feed back and the effective participation of members of radio forums and clubs in the programmes. ECA's work programme and medium-term plan called for drawing the attention of member States to the important role of the mass media in effecting change in rural areas and thereby accelerating developing in Africa.

5. Speaking on behalf of KAF, Mr. Lankes, the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany in Ethiopia, said that FCA and KAF had been co-operating closely in projects related to the mass media in general and to radio and publications in particular. Although they had only recently begun to co-operate, the prospects for their association were bright because of a wide variety of projects derived from FCA's work programme.

Election of officers

6. The Workshop elected the following officers :

Chairman: Mr. Robert Owusu (Ghana)

Vice-Chairman: Mr. Baba Halaou (Mali)

Rapporteur: Mr. Sam Pule (Botswana)

Adoption of the agenda

7. The following agenda was adopted by the Workshop:

1. Consideration of country reports
2. New developments and trends in the use of radio forums/clubs in promoting rural development
3. Organization and administration of radio forums/clubs (co-ordination with government services)
4. Organization and stimulation of inter-personal communication at the grass-root level and the problem of feedback
5. Programmes for radio forums/clubs (target groups : children, women, etc.)
6. Teaching aids and technical equipment
7. Questions on training of:
   a) Staff
   b) Members of radio forums/clubs
8. Any other business

8. On 8 December 1977, as part of the programme of the Workshop, the participants visited the Educational Mass Media Service of the Ethiopian Ministry of Education in Addis Ababa.

PART TWO: FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE WORKSHOP

Consideration of country reports (agenda item 1)

9. After listening to the written constitutions submitted by the Gambia, the Niger, Sierra Leone and Senegal, the representatives of most of the countries represented at the Workshop said that radio forums and radio clubs existed in their countries although in some cases the forums and clubs were called farmers' forums and listening groups.

10. In some countries such as Ghana, radio forums and clubs had been in existence for as long as 15 years; in others, such as the Congo for just a few months. In countries like Cape Verde or Lesotho , no such groups have been established as yet. It was agreed that radio forums and clubs helped to make rural folk aware of development problems and thus contributed to the acceleration of rural development. Radio (or farmers') forums were in almost every case intended for farmers and animal breeders and members of co-operatives, while radio clubs were for school children, youngfarmers and other youth groups.

11. Problems: The fact was established that there were problems of different types and magnitude in using radio forums and clubs effectively. Most countries were found to have the following problems:

(i) Insufficiency of trained manpower to plan and supervise effective programmes;

(ii) Knowing how to achieve the correct linguistic balance in the educational programmes offered. Only a few African countries were fortunate enough to have one language which was understood and spoken by all their inhabitants;

(iii) Failure of broadcasts to be heard in all parts of a country because transmitters not sufficiently powerful;

(iv) Impossibility of organizing radio forums and clubs because of lack of funds;

(v) Lack of interest in programmes on the part of members of some radio forums and clubs due to rigidity of format or lack of entertainment value;

(vi) Difficulty of supervising existing radio forums/clubs due to lack of adequate means of transport for the staff;

(vii) Lack of follow-up and feedback leading to inefficiency or total closure of forums or clubs;

(viii) Difficulty of obtaining broadcasting hours suitable to all members.

12. Solutions: The Workshop agreed that for radio forums/clubs to succeed:

(a) Leaders must be trained in group dynamics;

(b) Programmes should be prepared with the co-operation and consent of the people for whom they were meant;

(c) Programmes should not relate exclusively to forums or clubs but should be interwoven with music and items of cultural interest;

(d) Programmes should also be prepared not only in the national language of a country but also in other languages or dialects spoken in that country;

(e) Radio forums and clubs should not confine themselves to programmes related to agriculture, animal husbandry, anc co-operatives but should cover other fields such as health, nutrition, culture, youth training and political and civic education;

(f) Leaders should visit forums and clubs regularly to encourage and evaluate them;

(g) Leaders of radio forums and clubs should not work in isolation but should try to bring administrative and political leaders into association with their work;

(h) Radio forums and clubs should not be started from scratch but should be built on some existing social or economic association or group, such as a co-operative society or a youth club.

13. Countries which had not yet organized radio forums and clubs and were eager to embark on such activities and countries which wanted to expand their present activities in that connexion were assured by the representatives of international organizations and United Nations agencies represented at the Workshop that they could be assisted in organizing radio forums and clubs if they made an official request for such assistance.

New developments and trends in the use of radio forums/clubs in promoting rural development (Agenda item 2)

14. Under this agenda item, two working documents were prepared and distributed to the participants. Mr. P. Meyer of Radio Voice of Germany (Deutsche Welle), the author of the first paper, underlined the following facts while he was introducing his paper:

(i) Rural broadcasting was a new language because it raised questions about the nature of the message transmitted and how it was transmitted. It, therefore, required a thorough knowledge of communication techniques;

(ii) Rural broadcasting should be related to other development efforts, and should be dealt with as a service among other extension services since it was an integral part of the communication process to create awareness, participation and feedback;

(iii) If the mass media were to make a real contribution to development, it would be necessary to improve the quality of radio forums and clubs; and if development was to benefit the people, they must participate in their own development planning;

(iv) Regional planning and programming was required if the material disseminated by mass media was to be acceptable for all parts of a country;

(v) It might be advisable to consider integrating radio forums/clubs with social clubs in rural areas, where the use of radios and the availability of receivers were now widespread;

(vi) When planning for radio forums and clubs, their programmes and effectiveness, feedback and other related problems, research work and its findings must be taken into consideration in order to know who was to say what, to whom, for what purpose, when and how;

(vii) Concerning feed back, it was necessary for programme producers, advisers and group leaders to seek and maintain close co-operation with local political and administrative leaders; otherwise, it might prove difficult to gather club or forum members and to get their reactions to the programmes broadcast.

15. It was also noted:

(a) That, as in the case of Ghana, radio clubs could also be used for educational purposes when most of their members were school children or students, who could in turn use the broadcast material to enlighten their parents if they were illiterate;

b) That if they were to fulfil their developmental role, radio forums and clubs provide two-way communication between the organizers and leaders and other authorities and the members.

16. The Second working document prepared by the International institute of Communications (IIC) was presented by Mr. W.F. Coleman, a member of the Board of Trustees of IIC. In his introductory remarks, attention was drawn to a number of salient points made in the paper.

17. There were four basic approaches to communications: thinking:

(i) Communications for persuasion;

(ii) Communications to transmit information;

(iii) Communications as a means of social interaction and relationship;

(iv) Communications as an instrument of social, economic and political change.

18. Countries offering examples of planned and imaginative use of radio communication for development included India, Indonesia, Guatemala, Colombia, Brazil, the Philippines, China and the United Republic of Tanzania. Some of the projects and experiments undertaken in those countries were described in the paper. Almost all the projects described related to field organization, programme planning and techniques, the organization and maintenance of good reception at the village level and attempts to co-ordinate the activities of a number of government agencies dealing with rural community development. Problems commonly encountered included those related to an insufficient number of organizers, inadequate transport facilities and difficulties in maintaining and repairing receiving equipment.

19. Mr. Kiranmani A. Dikshit, the resource person from Nepal, made a verbal contribution to the discussion under this item of the agenda by briefly describing the background and development of radio farm forums in his country. He said an unusual feature of those farm forums was that their members were given an incentive to listen to the agricultural programmes broadcast. The forums were very popular with villagers, possibly because village administrators, officials from research centres and extension officials visited the villages regularly, talked to villagers and got to know their problems and in that way served as feedback agents.

Organization and administration of radio forums/clubs co-ordination with government services (agenda item 3)

20. The paper delivered under this agenda item was contributed by the representative of UNICEF and was divided into two parts:

(a) The role of educational radio in efforts to mobilize the masses for development;

(b) Radio coverage and organization of listening groups in Africa.

21. In discussing the various points raised in the paper, the Workshop identified the following problems and solutions:

Problems

(a) It was difficult for local rural radio (or even the national radio) to cover the whole territory of most African countries because of their vast size;

(b) In some countries, there were villages without a single radio set;

(c) Some radio stations had weak transmitters making it necessary for listeners to buy very powerful receivers;

(d) In some countries, most national radio time was devoted to propaganda broadcasts instead of to educational, cultural, information and entertainment programmes;

(e) Some countries, such as Burundi, had installed transmitters which were unsuitable to their terrain;

(f) The radio station staff in most countries lacked proper training;

(g) In some countries, radio caused misunderstandings with neighbouring countries by broadcasting provocative political programmes;

(h) Some countries, such as Burundi, had no villages, which made the organization of radio forums and clubs very difficult;

(i) Owing to lack of proper training for programme producers, the programmes broadcast were sometimes disliked, or not understood by villagers;

(j) Because they lack proper training, organizers of radio forums and clubs do not bother to obtain feedback on radio forums and clubs or to evaluate them.

Solutions:

(a) There must be good co-ordination between the Ministry or agency in charge of rural radio and ministries and organizations directly involved in national development;

(b) Radio leader should be given enough autonomy to run the radio property for the good of the nation;

(c) There must be good programme balance in which rural programmes, because of their importance were allotted more broadcasting time than other programme;

(d) In countries where radio sets were too expensive. Governments should lower sales taxes and customs and excise duties on them in order to bring them within the purchasing power of rural communities;

(e) Programmes must be made interesting and comprise a good proportion of entertainment;

(f) Radio personnel, especially technical staff, must be properly trained;

(g) Since radio is a necessary tool of development, Governments should allocate enough funds to meet its development and recurrent expenses;

(h) Certain elements of foreign broadcasts should be adopted to improve national radio programmes;

(i) Countries should be free to choose the terminology to use with regard to radio forums, radio clubs, radio farm forums or listening groups;

(j) People creating radio programmes should remember that knowledge imported from other countries should be used to improve national health, economy or performance;

(k) Programmes, must be written so that the audience at which they are directed can understand them;

(l) Participation by members of radio forums and clubs and by villagers in general should be sought by interviewing them and conducting dialogues with them;

(m) Instead of installing powerful transmitters within the short-wave band, it might be advisable for regional radio stations or booster stations to use either medium-wave or V.H.F. bands or both;

(n) Programmes broadcast to radio forums and clubs should not be confined to agriculture and the co-operative movement but should be widened to include health, functional literacy, good environment, children's programmes and other programmes relevant to rural development;

(o) Every broadcasting station should have a programme-reviewing committee consisting of the staff of the station and of representatives of Ministries and organizations involved in radio programmes and of the radio forums and clubs or listening public reached by the station;

(p) Rural young people should be organized into youth listening groups so that they might be trained in useful functions;

(q) The following methods should be used in securing constant feedback from radio forums or clubs:

(i) Discussions between listeners and extension agents;

(ii) Tape-recorder interviews with listeners;

(iii) Letters from listeners to the organizers of forums and clubs;

(iv) Discussions with field extension workers;

(v) Regular (monthly/weekly) reports of the clubs;

(vi) Written reports from field extension workers;

(vii) Programme pre-testing;

(viii) Observation of community reaction to new techniques in use.

Organization and stimulation of inter-personal communication at the grassroot level and the problem of feedback (Agenda item 4)

22. Mr. Dikshit introduced a paper he had prepared on the organization and stimulation of inter-personal communication at the grassroot level and the problem of feedback and the workshop noted the following points which had a direct bearing on the African context:

(i) Community development programmes provided a good base on which to build radio forums and clubs in countries where they did not exist;

(ii) A country with a rural population possessing plenty of radio sets was in a particularly favourable position for organizing radio forums and clubs;

(iii) Well organized radio forums or clubs or listening groups provided an excellent medium for stimulating communications among individuals and ultimately for promoting socio-economic development;

(iv) For radio forums and clubs to succeed, there was a need for personal contact through political, economic, social, religious and governmental mass media and through community and family organizations;

(v) A Government which succeeded in organizing a radio forum or club in each village would reach far more farmers than could be contacted by field officials;

(vi) It might be desirable to give members of radio forums and clubs an incentive of some kind in order to ensure maximum participation;

23. The Workshop made note of the following points which arose from the discussions following its consideration of Mr. Dikshit's paper:

(i) As levels of development depended on education and teachers were in short supply in Africa, educational radio and TV should be extensively used to broadcast adult education programmes;

(ii) A knowledge of the environment of the people concerned was necessary in organizing effective radio forums and clubs;

(iii) Tape recordings of farmers' problems sent to authorities at headquarters could help to improve the quality of life;

(iv) Some of the educational programmes broadcast should be about improving the environment and the quality of life;

(v) Radio authorities and organizers of radio forums and clubs should not hesitate to share their knowledge and experience with United Nations and international organizations;

(vi) Unconstructive taboos and customs should be discarded. For example, customs and taboos should not be allowed to keep women from attending meetings or joining forums or clubs;

(vii) To overcome the effects of such customs and taboos, radio programmes should be produced at the grassroots (village) level with the participation of the villagers;

(viii) Messages directed at villagers should be timely, clear and of vital interest to them;

(ix) Leaders of radio forums and clubs should be provided with information enabling them to provide the proper sort of leadership

(x) To promote the effective participation of villagers in their own development, every village should have a development committee through which discussions and development efforts could be channelled;

(xi) Trade unions should be formed to give rural workers an effective voice in their own affairs;

Programmes for radio forums/clubs (Target groups: Children, Women, etc.)
(Agenda item 5)

24. A paper on programmes for radio forums and clubs which was contributed by ECA/African Training and Research Centre for Women (ATRCW) was introduced by a representative of the Centre.

25. After discussion, the following recommendations were made for consideration by radio forums and clubs:

(i) To accelerate rural development, programmes for women's integration in development should be translated into action, not in isolation but as a complement to over-all development programmes;

(ii) African women should be taught income-generating activities using locally obtainable foods and other resources in order to enable them to have a regular source of income and to raise their living standards;

(iii) Food preservation should be taught to women to reduce food wastage;

(iv) Recourse should be let to ATRCW's African Women's Task Force, which taught African women simple technologies, such as tie-dying, to increase their earnings;

(v) Simple village technologies should be introduced as labour-saving devices;

(vi) Adult education in general and literacy programmes in particular should be introduced in rural areas;

(vii) Rural development should aim at the advancement of the individual. Radio forums and clubs should be invited to do their utmost to create awareness among rural people and to draw on the programme of action adopted by the World Employment Conference organized by ILO in June 1976, which focused on meeting the basic needs of the poorest strata of the population;

(viii) Educational activities in the non-formal sector should be introduced in rural areas with a view to training artisans of both sexes (e.g. carpenters sand blacksmiths);

(ix) When modern techniques were introduced in rural areas to improve the quality of life, care must be taken to see that they helped to hold African families together rather than breaking them up;

(x) Rural African families should be taught (through the radio, TV and other mass media) how to improve the quality of their health and environment at both the village and the national level;

(xi) Day-care centres should be started in rural areas and at places of employment such as factories to enable mothers to concentrate on their work;

(xii) Special programmes should be prepared for rural children to enable them to shoulder their responsibilities as citizens.

26. Attitudes and values regarding women's role in African society, especially in rural areas were held to be a major source of constraint for their full participation in development. It was recognized that radio programmes could be effective devices for social change and that they could be of significant help in removing cultural and traditional biases and in making the public better aware of the new roles for women in the socio-economic spheres.

27. It was felt that programmes should project a more dynamic image of women and take into account their actual and potential contribution to society. They should also emphasize the importance of the separate and collective roles of women, men and children in the family and the community at large.

28. The view was expressed that programmes should highlight the roles women currently played in the rural economic sector and encourage their participation in co-operatives and other income-generating activities.

29. Programmes on the spacing of children, child-care and nutrition were important for the health and well-being of entire nations. Radio programmes dealing with health should not overlook the importance of leisure for African women since research had shown that their workload was extremely arduous.

30. Finally, participants agreed that if an increasing number of women were trained to work in radio and TV, the outlook of women would be more fully reflected in the media and it would be easier to appeal to audiences of rural women. Also, women extension workers, in particular, could be utilized as resource persons to help in preparing programmes directed to women's specific needs.

Teaching aids and technical equipment (Agenda item 6)

31. In the discussion on agenda item 6, the Workshop decided that the expression "teaching aids and equipment" was a misnomer in that such aids and equipment were not intended to teach but to supplement the teaching offered. Media and equipment must be carefully selected, and the material presented through teaching aids must be demonstrated and discussed afterwards otherwise there was the risk of handing over the class to the media.

32. A film on teaching aids was shown in which the quality of information received through the different senses was compared. Although information received by sight had the most powerful impact, information was rarely conveyed by that channel. Aids which combined sight and hearing were even more effective, but the best aids of all were those which relied on sight, hearing and touch.

33. Aids and equipment ranged from the simple to the complex, i.e., from the chalk-board to the computer-based instruction medium. In choosing the proper equipment, therefore, account had to be taken of cost, the subject matter involved, the age of the students, lesson objectives, availability of electricity and other factors. Teachers could produce their own kits at modest cost, using slides, filmstrips, synchronized tapes, simple super-8 movies and flash-cards. Teachers should be trained in the use of such aids.

Questions on training of: (a) Staff, (b) radio forums/clubs members (agenda item 7)

34. The representative of FCA introduced a paper entitled "Training of staff by distant education". In the discussion which followed participants noted that:

(i) Staff for radio forums and clubs should be trained by both direct and distant education methods;

(ii) Staff should be given both theoretical and practical training in which case studies should be used as much as possible;

(iii) Staff should be trained locally before they were sent overseas for further training.

35. The need for training the following was also noted:

(i) Researchers to evaluate the impact of the message to be transmitted. They could be recruited locally from among people with backgrounds in anthropology and similar subjects and sent overseas for a short period of further training;

(ii) Programme animators, who should be agriculturalists, physicians or social workers by profession and preferably with some training in psychology at specialized institutions overseas;

(iii) Script writers, who should be trained journalists capable of writing scripts in simple language. They could be trained locally;

(iv) Broadcasters (could be trained locally).

(v) Producers, who could be trained at African institutions of mass communication. They should preferably be dramatists by profession.

36. Inter-club visits and study tours to other countries with long experience of radio forums and clubs should be arranged as a form of training for members of radio forums and clubs.

Closing session

37. At its closing session, the Workshop was addressed by the Chief of the ECA Social Development Division, speaking on behalf of the Executive Secretary of ECA. In his address, The Chief of The Social Development Division thanked the resource persons and the participants for having together succeeded in achieving the objectives set for the Workshop. He pointed out that the level of discussions and the contents of the final report and recommendations had confirmed the essential need for concentrating the Workshop's discussions on rural development through the effective use of radio forums, clubs and similar groups. This was because most Africans lived in rural areas, which constituted the main source of industrial raw materials and foreign currency and radio could be made into the most suitable form of development communication in the African rural sector. As a follow-up to the Workshop, ECA was already planning to hold an intergovernmental conference in June 1978, at which directors of information offices, news agencies and film and TV organizations and editors of newspapers and magazines would discuss the importance of mass media in effecting change in rural areas of Africa.

38. In his address at the closing session, the representative of KAF said that KAF was pleased to have co-sponsored its first workshop with ECA. It had agreed to co-sponsor the Workshop because the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany had wanted to contribute its share to the efforts of developing countries and to increase its partnership in development.

39. The Chairman of the Workshop Mr. Robert Owusu (Ghana), thanked ECA and KAF for organizing the Workshop and the people of Ethiopia for the hospitality they had shown the participants during their stay in Addis Ababa. He said he felt that the Workshop had succeeded in identifying the problems encountered in radio forums/clubs and had suggested some solutions to them and hoped its report, would be used as a basis for further discussion in all African countries.

PART THREE: RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WORKSHOP

The Workshop adopted the following recommendations:

1. That African countries members of ECA, OAU, and URTNA which do not already have rural radio services should establish such services so as to improve the social well-being of the rural population;

2. That all African States members of ECA, OAU and URTNA should intensify their efforts to provide their national radio services with effective transmitters, receivers and other technical facilities for the purpose of conveying general information and educational programmes to their rural population;

3. That ECA make every effort to see that, at the next session of its Conference of Ministers, consideration is given to ways and means of ensuring that the majority of the time available for broadcasting is devoted to educational programmes in general and to rural radio in particular and that rural radio is allocated sufficient resources for it to play its role of helping rural people to solve this daily problems effectively;

4. That all African Governments should take the action needed to establish rural radio listening groups free from all political intereference, whose members, regardless of their sex, age or religious or cultural affiliation, are guaranted total freedom of self-expression;

5. That African Governments should set up inter-State training centres in rural broadcasting and that in the meantime they should make full use of the institutions which already exist in Africa for that purpose;

6. That all rural broadcasting services should make adequate provision for programmes of special interest to women, young people and children;

7. That ECA, in close co-operation with OAU, URTNA and other concerned bodies, should take the proper steps to ensure that international agencies and regional organizations co-ordinated their programmes for the development of communications so that the optimum results can be achieved;

8. That similar workshops be organized regularly in order to permit those responsible for rural educational radio, including radio forums and clubs, to exchange experiences and to supplement their practical training;

9. That a permanent office be set up within the ECA secretariat for the purpose of co-ordinating the implementation of and follow-up action on these recommendations and of comparing the progress made by each country.

ANNEX

SOME MASS MEDIA INSTITUTES WHERE STAFF
MAY BE TRAINED

African Institutes

1. The Kenya Institute of Mass Communication, Nairobi,
2. The School of Journalism, University of Nairobi, Kenya,
3. The Institute of Mass Communication, Lagos, Nigeria,
4. The Institute of Mass Communication, University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana.

Overseas Institutes

1. Schools of Journalism and Radio/TV of Indiana University, Indiana, USA,
2. The Hilversum Institute of Social Studies and Communication, Holland.

Note: This list should appear as an annex rather then in the main body of the report.